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Teacher Quality, Effectiveness is GSU Program Focus

March 20, 2006, University Park, IL - While it is commonly known that teaching is a hard job, it may be a surprise to learn that more than fifty percent of all new teachers do not stay in the classroom after five years. They leave for many reasons, not in the least is the lack of success and support.

To counter this trend, to provide the support and resources teachers in training and new teachers require, and to encourage teacher retention, the Federal Department of Education awarded a Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant to the College of Arts and Sciences of Governors State University.

"We work from the beginning of teacher training with our students, through the first years of a teacher's career, and with the mentors who help and supervise them by offering unique and effective training opportunities, increased communication, and avenues of support," explained Dr. Connie Mietlicki, Director of the Grant and Assistant Professor of English and Secondary Education at GSU.

The success of the program, now in its second year, can be assessed by the overwhelmingly positive response generated by events sponsored by Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant. More than 40 student teachers, teachers, and administrators from GSU and Bloom High School District 206 attended a recent three-day training program in CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies).

"The district believes so strongly in this project and the worth of the training that they provided their educators with the substitute teachers so they could attend this workshop," added Mietlicki.

According to Mietlicki, the grant frequently sponsors CRISS training workshops because of its proven effectiveness. "CRISS increases student learning through enhanced teacher effectiveness. The focus is on the student taking control of learning, becoming more involved, and active in class. The training shows teachers how to accomplish this. Teacher quality improves and students benefit. Studies show they retain the information far better months later."

In addition to enhancing the skills of classroom teachers, the grant is also used to improve the effectiveness of administrators. "With our partner districts, Bloom and Rich Townships, we sponsor workshops, such as 'Having Hard Conversations,'" designed to improve management skills and increase communication," said Mietlicki. "Administrators benefit from honing their skills. If they are more effective, they can help their staff be more effective. It is all part of our efforts to ultimately benefit the students."

For more information about the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant, call (708) 534-6975.